

## **Motivation for Consumption and Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction towards the Sustainable Food Purchase**

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### **Abstract**

Today, there are extremely increasing number of those whose sickness is caused by food consumption, together with the unsafe from pesticide and chemical contamination in food raw materials. In addition, global warming from farming and ranching is also the main reason for people to consume more of sustainable food. Sustainable food shop, therefore, becomes the alternative for this group of consumers to conveniently and confidently select whatever products that they want. However, the research involving this issue is still scarce; this research; therefore, was conducted in order to discover the consumers' motivation towards the sustainable food purchase, to investigate the important factors the consumers expect to receive and their satisfaction levels towards those factors under the sustainable food purchase. Finally, the results are to become the suggestions for the government's policy development and the entrepreneurs' business strategies.

Data obtained from the in-depth interviews with the sustainable-food-shop owners and the survey in 400 sustainable food consumers was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using Factor Analysis, ANOVA, and Chi-square. The information regarding the sample's age range and monthly income seems to be lower than those found in previous research conducted abroad. While motivation for having good health is still number one and congruent with the previous research, environmental motivation becomes increasingly important for sustainable food purchase in this group.

Even though the consumers expected most for the place or store factor, followed by the service process and personnel factor, their satisfaction levels regarding the first two factors still have room to be more developed.

Policy makers can use the outcomes from this research as the guidelines for developing policy to promote both production and consumption sectors while business entrepreneurs can apply the results in developing the better marketing strategies, store, and the service quality.

**Key Words:** Sustainable food/ organic food/ green food/ toxic-free food/ customer satisfaction/ motivation

### **1. Introduction**

Today, there are extremely increasing number of those whose sickness is caused by food consumption, together with the unsafe from pesticide and chemical contamination in food raw materials. In addition, global warming from farming and ranching is also the main reason for people to

consume more of sustainable food (EPAW, 2009). Sustainable food shop, therefore, becomes the alternative for this group of consumers to conveniently and confidently select whatever products that they want. However, the research involving this issue is still scarce; this research; therefore, was conducted in order to discover the consumers' motivation towards the sustainable food

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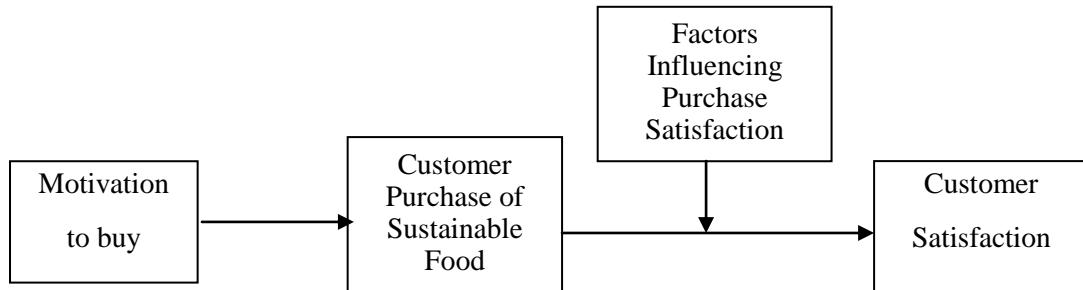
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purchase, to investigate the important factors the consumers expect to receive and their satisfaction levels towards those factors under the sustainable food purchase. Finally, the results are to become the suggestions for the government's policy development and the entrepreneurs' business strategies.

Sustainable food means food that is healthy for consumers and animals, does not harm the environment, is humane for workers, respects animals, provides a fair wage for the farmers, and supports and enhances rural communities. (Green meetings, 2009). In this research; however, will cover 4 categories of sustainable food that are quite well-known in Thailand- organic food, green food, toxic-free food, and fair-trade food.

By gathering various theories and related research works about consumer behavior (Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; Kotler and Keller, 2009), motivation (Maslow, 1954; Herzberg, 1966;

Bangalore, 2008), attitude and purchase intention (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Fazio, 1990), food adoption model (Khan, 1981; McGuire, 1968; Shepherd et al., 1988; Lee and Green, 1990; Contento et al., 1993; Bareham, 1995; Gerhardy et al., 1995; Herne, 1995; Shepherd et al., 1996; Schaffner et al., 1998; Kotler and Armstrong, 1999; Warwick et al., 1999; Cheng et al., 2000; Solomon and Stuart, 2003; Petchdakul, 2004), retailing (Inkaew, 2010; Lai et al., 2010) and service and service satisfaction (Oliver, 1981; Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Berry et al., 1985; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Yi, 1990; Anderson and Mary, 1993; Cadott et al., 1995; Chalermjirarat, 1996; Dejakupa, 1997; Thanapiboonpong, 2003; Cooil, et al., 2007; Nantapiboon, 2008; Proyroongroj, 2008; Pitiveerarat, 2010), the research framework is in the following figure 1:



**Figure 1:** Research Framework

This study aims to discover consumers' motivation towards the sustainable food purchase (health, safety, fairness to producers and vendors, environment, religious, and mass media and society) and the important factors consumers expect to see when they make the purchase (product, service process and personnel, price, place, and promotion) together with their satisfaction levels towards these factors.

## 2. Methodology

In addition to the documentary reviews from related theories and previous research as described, primary data was obtained by conducting the in-depth interviews with the sustainable-food-shop owners to gain their idea and comments for the market situation, success factors for their stores, and problems found. This information was also used in designing the questionnaire besides using the "Handbook of Marketing Scales" (Bearden et al., 1999) and "Issues in Measuring and Modeling Customer Satisfaction" (Udorn, 1997) as the references. After the pretest and minor

questionnaire adjustment, survey in 400 sustainable food consumers was conducted in nine volunteered sustainable-food shops around Bangkok and the outskirt using simple random sampling technique and the obtained data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using factor Analysis, ANOVA, and Chi-square. Since cronbach's alpha values of all variables are beyond 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), the reliability of the questionnaire is proved and acceptable.

## 3. Results

The number of female obtained in this research is around 3 times more than that of male. Most of the samples are office workers aged between 24 to 53 years old. More than half of them hold bachelor's degree, followed by below bachelor's degree, and master's degree. Single status or married having children is the majority. Almost half of the samples have the average monthly income of less than 20,000 baht (Details as shown in Table 1).

**Table 1:** Sample profile

Sample Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (n= 400)
Gender			
• Female		301	75.3
• Male		99	24.7
Age			
• 14-23 years old		32	8.0
• 24-33		117	29.2
• 34-43		110	27.5
• 44-53		89	22.3
• > 53		52	13.0
Occupation			
• Office workers		131	32.8
• Civil servant		82	20.5
• Private entrepreneur		59	14.7
• Student		34	8.5
• Others		94	23.5
Education			
• < Bachelor's		103	25.7
• Bachelor's		215	53.8
• Master's		77	19.3
• Doctoral		5	1.2

Sample Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (n= 400)
Status			
• Single	191	47.8	
• Married/having children	171	42.7	
• Married/no children	32	8.0	
• Divorced/widow	6	1.5	
Average monthly income			
• < 10,000 baht	78	19.5	
• 10,001 – 20,000	98	24.5	
• 20,001 – 30,000	70	17.5	
• 30,001 – 40,000	45	11.2	
• > 40,001 – 50,000	109	27.3	

### 3.1 Sustainable-food purchase behaviors

In general, only 38 percent of all samples know what sustainable food is.

However, 33 and 29 percent of them do not know and feel unsure, consecutively, about the definition (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Consumers' perception towards the sustainable food purchase and various categories of sustainable food

Perception	Frequency	Percentage (n= 400)
Do you know what sustainable food is		
• Know	152	38.0
• Do not know	132	33.0
• Unsure	116	29.0
Sustainable food category that you buy most often is:		
• Green food	206	51.5
• Organic food	60	15.0
• Toxic-free food	52	13.0
• Fair-trade food	8	2.0
• Do not know	21	5.3
• Unsure	53	13.2

After having them read the definitions of all sustainable food categories, around a half of the samples confirm that they frequently bought green food (51.5 %), followed by organic food (15.0 %), toxic-free food (13.0 %), and fair-trade food (2.0%). Moreover, the percentage of those who still do not know or are unsure what kind of food they bought falls to 5.3 % and 13.2 %, consecutively.

For the purchase frequency, around one-third of the consumers bought sustainable food once a week, followed by once every 2-3 days, and almost everyday, consecutively. In other words, 65.5 percent of the samples are the loyalty customers.

However, more than 70 percent of the samples spent up to 300 baht for each purchase and only 6.7 percent of them spent more than 500 baht (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Purchase frequency and spending amount of the sustainable food purchase.

Purchase behaviors	Frequency	Percentage (n= 400)
How often do you usually buy sustainable food?		
• Almost everyday	64	16.0
• Every 2-3 days	78	19.5
• Once a week	120	30.0
• 2-3 times a month	51	12.7
• Once a month	41	10.3
• Less than once a month	46	11.5
How much do you usually spend for each purchase?		
• Less than 100 baht	77	19.3
• 101 - 200 baht	138	34.5
• 201 - 300 baht	75	18.7
• 301 - 400 baht	46	11.5
• 401 - 500 baht	37	9.3
• More than 500 baht	27	6.7

### 3.2 Sustainable-food purchase motivation

From Table 4, health motivation shows the strongest impact on the sustainable food purchase of the sample with the average mean of 3.90, followed by motivation for food safety ( $\bar{x} = 3.84$ ), environmental motivation ( $\bar{x} = 3.56$ ), motivation for fairness to producers and vendors ( $\bar{x} = 3.35$ ), religious motivation ( $\bar{x} = 2.86$ ), and motivation from the

influence of mass media and society ( $\bar{x} = 2.31$ ). From the criteria written by Vanichbancha (2005), it is obvious that health, safety, environmental, and fairness to producers and vendors motivation have high impact on the sustainable food purchase in this group of consumers while religious motivation has the moderate impact and mass media and society has a small impact on the purchase.

**Table 4:** Average means and standard deviations of the purchase motivation

Motivation	$\bar{x}$ **	S.D.
1. Heath (4 items)	3.90	0.97
2. Safety (3 items)	3.84	0.92
3. Environment (3 items)	3.56	1.01
4. Fairness to producers and vendors (3 items)	3.35	0.98
5. Religious (4 items)	2.86	1.21
6. Mass media and society (4 items)	2.31	1.15

\*\*Notes: 1 = lowest level of motivation; 5 = highest level of motivation

### 3.3 Factors expected by consumers as important to the sustainable-food purchase

Table 5 shows that the most important factor consumers expect to see in the stores when they make the purchase is the place factor ( $\bar{x} = 4.39$ ), followed by

service process and personnel factor ( $\bar{x} = 4.26$ ), product factor ( $\bar{x} = 3.97$ ), price factor ( $\bar{x} = 3.83$ ), and promotion factor ( $\bar{x} = 3.49$ ), consecutively. Therefore, according to Vanichbancha (2005), all this five factors are important to very important to consumers' expectation.

**Table 5:** Average means and standard deviations of the expected factors consumers perceive as important to the sustainable-food purchase

Factors	$\bar{x}$ **	S.D.
1. Place	4.39	0.95
2. Service process and personnel	4.26	0.99
3. Product	3.97	0.86
4. Price	3.83	1.00
5. Promotion	3.49	1.03

\*\*Notes: 1 = lowest important; 5 = highest important

Furthermore, details of the subfactors are ranked as follows:

*3.3.1 Place factor* includes store cleanliness, easy-accessed store location, closed to consumers' home/office location, easy-to-find product display, etc., consecutively.

*3.3.2 Service process and personnel factor* includes personnel's responsibility, their product knowledge, their service reliability, their empathy and human relationship, their politeness, etc., consecutively.

*3.3.3. Product factor* includes product's freshness, usefulness, and cleanliness, complete information labeling, reliable product quality, convenience-to-use packaging, etc., consecutively.

*3.3.4 Price factor* includes fair price, appropriate price, and credit/debit card acceptance, consecutively.

*3.3.5 Promotion factor* includes sales promotion, product/service information brochure, product/store

information communication through appropriate channels, membership system for creating customer relationship and distributing information, PR website, etc., consecutively.

#### **3.4 Customer satisfaction towards the factors expected by consumers as important to the sustainable-food purchase**

Levels of satisfaction that customers have on the mentioned expected factors are shown in Table 6. Factor that the consumers feel satisfied most is product factor ( $\bar{x} = 3.72$ ) and place factor ( $\bar{x} = 3.72$ ), followed by service process and personnel factor, ( $\bar{x} = 3.66$ ), price factor ( $\bar{x} = 3.33$ ), and promotion factor ( $\bar{x} = 2.91$ ). While the first four factors receive somewhat high to high levels of satisfaction, promotion factor gains only a moderate degree of satisfaction (Vanichbancha, 2005).

**Table 6:** Average means and standard deviations of customer satisfaction towards the expected factors consumers perceive as important to the sustainable-food

Factors	$\bar{x}$ **	S.D.
1. Product	3.72	0.89
2. Place	3.72	0.95
3. Service process and personnel	3.66	0.98
4. Price	3.33	1.03
5. Promotion	2.91	1.11

\*\*Notes: 1 = lowest satisfaction; 5 = highest satisfaction

In details, 5 subfactors of each aspect can be ranked as follows:

3.4.1 *Product factor* includes product usefulness, freshness, cleanliness, complete and informative labeling, reliable product quality, and convenience-to-use packaging, consecutively.

3.4.2 *Place factor* includes store cleanliness, easy-accessed store location, easy-to-find product display, easy-to-find location, store accreditation from reliable organization, etc., consecutively.

3.4.3 *Service process and personnel* includes personnel's empathy and human relationship, their politeness, their product knowledge, their informative conversation, their appropriate attire, etc., consecutively.

3.4.4 *Price factor* includes appropriate price, fair price, and credit/debit card acceptance, consecutively.

3.4.5 *Promotion factor* includes product/service information brochure, store information communication through appropriate channels, sales promotion, PR website, membership system for creating

customer relationship and distributing information, etc., consecutively.

### 3.5 Purchase behaviors categorized by different sustainable food categories

When categorizing purchase behaviors (frequency of purchase and amount of money spent) by different types of sustainable food and comparing the behaviors among these various kinds of food using chi-square technique, the results are as shown in Table 7 and 8. Table 7 shows that there is significantly difference among the purchase frequency of different groups of sustainable food buyers at p-value less than .001. Most of the organic food buyers and green food buyers seem to make once-a-week purchase more than other groups of buyers do while majority of toxic-free food buyers and fair-trade food buyers buy the product almost everyday. For many of those who do not know or feel unsure what kind of food bought tend to make more of less-than-once-a-month purchase.

**Table 7:** Percentage and chi-square value for the relationship between frequency of purchase and different types of sustainable food

Types of sustainable food	frequency of purchase						Total
	Almost everyday	Every 2-3 days	Once a week	2-3 times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	
Organic food	6 10.0%	16 26.7%	23 <b>38.3%</b>	5 8.3%	7 11.7%	3 5.0%	60 100.0%
Toxic-free food	16 <b>30.8%</b>	9 17.3%	9 17.3%	7 13.5%	8 15.4%	3 5.8%	52 100.0%
Green food	28 13.6%	41 19.9%	76 <b>36.9%</b>	26 12.6%	15 7.3%	20 9.7%	206 100.0%
Fair-Trade Food	4 <b>50.0%</b>	0 0%	2 25.0%	1 12.5%	0 .0%	1 12.5%	8 100.0%
Do not know	4 19.0%	3 14.3%	2 9.5%	3 14.3%	2 9.5%	7 <b>33.3%</b>	21 100.0%
Unsure	6 11.3%	9 17.0%	8 15.1%	9 17.0%	9 17.0%	12 <b>22.6%</b>	53 100.0%

$\chi^2 = 60.756$ , df = 25, P = 0.000

**Table 8:** Percentage and chi-square value for the relationship between amounts of money spent in each purchase and different types of sustainable food

Types of sustainable food	Amount of money spent						Total
	less than 100 baht	101 - 200 baht	201 - 300 baht	301 - 400 baht	401 - 500 baht	more than 500 baht	
Organic food	6 10.0%	18 <b>30.0%</b>	13 <b>21.7%</b>	6 10.0%	7 11.7%	10 <b>16.7%</b>	60 100.0%
Toxic-free food	5 9.6%	24 <b>46.2%</b>	13 <b>25.0%</b>	4 7.7%	5 9.6%	1 1.9%	52 100.0%
Green food	39 <b>18.9%</b>	65 <b>31.6%</b>	36 17.5%	32 <b>15.5%</b>	19 9.2%	15 7.3%	206 100.0%
Fair-Trade Food	1 <b>12.5%</b>	6 <b>75.0%</b>	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 <b>12.5%</b>	8 100.0%
Do not know	4 19.0%	10 <b>47.6%</b>	5 <b>23.8%</b>	0 0%	2 9.5%	0 0%	21 100.0%
Unsure	22 <b>41.5%</b>	15 28.3%	8 15.1%	4 7.5%	4 7.5%	0 0%	53 100.0%

$\chi^2 = 56.121$ , df = 25, P = 0.000

Table 8 shows that there is significantly difference among the amounts of money spent in each purchase of different groups of sustainable food buyers at p-value less than .001. Most of the organic food buyers and toxic-free food buyers spend around 100 to 300 baht for each purchase more than other groups of buyers do while majority of green food buyers and fair-trade food buyers spend up to 200 baht only for each purchase. However, organic food buyers and fair-trade food buyers are those two groups of which the percentages of members (16.7% and 12.5%, consecutively) who spend more than 500 baht in each purchase are more than that of other groups of buyers. In addition, a green food buyer is the group that spends 301 to 400 baht purchase (15.5%) more than other groups do.

### 3.6 Purchase motivations categorized by different sustainable food categories

In order to find the differences among the means of purchase motivations of different sustainable food groups of buyers, one-way ANOVA at 95% confident level was performed. The results show that only safety motivation

and environmental motivation have been found significant results. Therefore, pairwise comparison using LSD technique was used to further analyze the mean differences among various groups of buyers under these two types of motivations.

Table 9 shows the significant differences between the means of organic food buyers and those who do not know the type of sustainable food purchased, the means of green food buyers and those who do not know the type of sustainable food purchased, and the means of fair-trade food buyers and those who do not know the type of sustainable food purchased. This can be concluded that the levels of safety motivation of organic food, green food, and fair-trade food buyers are higher than that of those who do not know the type of sustainable food purchased.

**Table 9:** Mean comparisons of the sustainable food purchase motivations among various types of food using LSD: Safety motivation

Types of food	$\bar{x}$	Organic food	Toxic-free food	Green food	Fair Trade Food	Do not know	Unsure
		3.91	3.74	3.93	4.25	3.37	3.74
<b>Organic food</b>	3.91	-	0.16	-0.02	-0.34	0.54*	0.16
<b>Toxic-free food</b>	3.74		-	-0.18	-0.51	0.38	0.00
<b>Green food</b>	3.93			-	-0.32	0.56*	0.18
<b>Fair Trade Food</b>	4.25				-	0.88*	0.51
<b>Do not know</b>	3.37					-	-0.38
<b>Unsure</b>	3.74						-

\* Significant level at 0.05

Table 10 shows the significant differences between the means of organic food buyers and those who do not know the type of sustainable food purchased, the means of toxic-free food buyers and those who do not know the type of sustainable food purchased, the means of green food buyers and those who do not know the type of sustainable food purchased, and the means of those who do not know the type of sustainable food

purchased and those who feel unsure. This can be concluded that the levels of environmental motivation of organic food, toxic-free food, and green food buyers are higher than that of those who do not know the type of sustainable food purchased. Also, the level of environmental motivation of those who feel unsure about the type of sustainable food purchased is higher than that of those who do not know the type of food.

**Table 10:** Mean comparisons of the sustainable food purchase motivations among various types of food using LSD: Environmental motivation

Types of food	$\bar{x}$	Organic food	Toxic-free food	Green food	Fair Trade Food	Do not know	Unsure
		3.47	3.57	3.71	2.95	3.62	
<b>Organic food</b>	3.80	-	0.33	0.23	0.09	0.85*	0.18
<b>Toxic-free food</b>	3.47		-	-0.09	-0.23	0.52*	-0.15
<b>Green food</b>	3.57			-	-0.14	0.61*	-0.06
<b>Fair Trade Food</b>	3.71				-	0.76	0.09
<b>Do not know</b>	2.95					-	-0.67*
<b>Unsure</b>	3.62						-

\* Significant level at 0.05

#### 4. Discussion

The results obtained in this study are both congruent and conflict with the previous studies found in the western countries (Sinnet and Lord, 1986; Gerhardy et al., 1995; Shepherd et al., 1996; Petchdakul, 2004). While the female buyers are still the mainstream of sustainable food customers, the average age range of the buyers tends to be lower than that found in the previous studies. Also, they seem to have the lower average income level. However, it confirms with the previous studies that the majority of buyers tend to have good education and work as white collar. This implies the new market potential of the sustainable food in Thailand. Together with the decline in the sustainable food price, it makes the products more affordable to the moderate-income people.

However, from the in-depth interviews and the survey, it is obvious that both the store owners and customers are mostly unaware of the meaning of sustainable food. However, when allowing them to read the definition, there are increasing numbers of those who know exactly what kind of sustainable food they bought.

Among all types of sustainable food, green food—food allowing the acceptable chemical food additives—becomes the most popular, followed by organic food and toxic-free food consecutively. Only 2 percent of buyers are the fair-trade food loyal while those who do not know or are unsure about the type of food are still somewhat high in number as 19 percent of all sample.

Majority of the buyers bought the products quite frequently, at least once a week, but spent not much money (up to 500 baht) for each purchase. This may be due to the nature of the products that are perishable.

Overall, health motivation is still the prime reason for the consumers to buy

the products, which confirms with what found in the previous research conducted in the organic food buyers (Petchdakul, 2004). Safety motivation is the second place, followed by environmental motivation, which receives a high level score. While fairness to producers and vendors and religious motivation are at the middle levels, mass media and society shows the lowest motivation for the sustainable food purchase in this study. It is obvious that environmental motivation becomes increasingly important for the consumers in buying the products which is contrast with the previous studies (Petchdakul, 2004).

For the expected factors, consumers pay more attention to the place or store factor, followed by service process and personnel factor, product factor, price factor and promotion factor, consecutively.

However, the consumers feel highly satisfied with the product factor, followed by place factor, and service process and personnel factor. Price and promotion factors are perceived only moderate level of satisfaction. This implies that store and service process including personnel are to be more emphasized and developed.

When considering the purchase behaviors according to the categories of sustainable food, toxic-free food buyers are those who perform the most frequently and highest amount of purchase buyers. However, green food buyers are the mainstream of the whole group since they contain more than a half of all buyers.

Finally, even though there is no difference among the levels of motivation from different groups of buyers, there are the differences of safety and environmental motivations between the buyers who know exactly what type of sustainable food they purchase and those who do not know or are unsure about the type of food. These results are contrast with the belief of a group of people who

feel that when the buyers are confused about the types of sustainable food, they may have different motivations for buying the products.

## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the results can be used to suggest the policy makers as followed:

**5.1 The government agency** should educate people the producers, the vendors, and the buyers about the differences of meanings among different types of sustainable food.

**5.2 The government agency** should promote the sustainable food research and development in order to increase the varieties of products so that the consumers can have more choices.

**5.3 The government agency** should promote more of environmental concern in the consumers' mind since it becomes an important motivation for buyers to purchase this kind of food.

Furthermore, the results can be used to suggest the entrepreneurs as followed:

### 5.4 Marketing strategy development

- Promotional campaign should be more focus on female who are not too old. The products should be provided with a wide range of price to reach people at all income levels.
- The sustainable food shop owners should pay more attention to store factor which includes store cleanliness, product display, easy-to-access location, parking space, etc.
- For service process and personnel factor, the entrepreneurs must train the staff to have more responsibility especially for product return or exchange due to the store's mistake. Staff must

know well about the products and be reliable when providing the service, together with good human relationship and politeness.

- Promotional factor should be more emphasized especially store and product public relations in order to educate people to know more. Informative brochure is useful and the information should also be communicated through the appropriate channels. Membership campaign and sales promotion are also important.
- When possible, entrepreneurs should categorize the buyers according to the types of sustainable food purchased in order to appropriately develop the fit marketing strategy for each group of buyers. For example, the sustainable food shop should aim primarily to target the green food buyers since they are the biggest group in number.

## 6. Acknowledgements

This research is funded by the research department of Thammasat University. The author would like to thank all the stakeholders who are the parts of the success of this research. Thank you the Green Market Network for cooperating with all the volunteered sustainable food shop owners and all the people who are the samples in the survey.

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